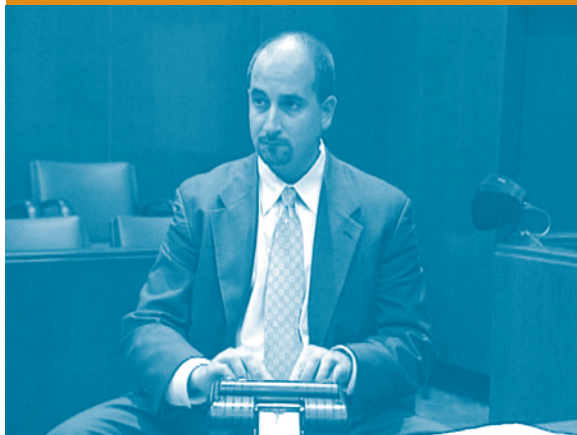


CALIFORNIA OCCUPATIONAL GUIDES

COURT AND SHORTHAND REPORTERS

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WHAT DO COURT AND SHORTHAND REPORTERS DO?

COURT AND SHORTHAND REPORTERS use a stenotype type machine and apply knowledge of shorthand symbols to record statements and testimony given at court trials, depositions, legislative hearings, business meetings, and conventions.

Court Reporters are full-time employees of a court system, usually assigned to a specific judge and court. About 27 percent of Court Reporters are employed in this capacity.

A stenotype machine uses symbols to represent sounds or “phonetics” of language. Court Reporters perform the following tasks:

- Listen to statements and testimony and rapidly make word-for-word recordings using a computer-aided-transcription (CAT) stenotype machine.
- Clearly read transcribed statements aloud in court or deposition settings, as needed.
- Edit transcripts of proceedings for accuracy.
- Format transcripts according to court requirements.

Computer-aided transcription (CAT) is a technology that allows for computerized shorthand reporting. This stenotype machine attaches to a computer to transcribe and display the English translation on the monitor.

Stenotype machines have 22 keys. Court Reporters press one and often several keys to record a “phonetic syllable” or an abbreviation for a word or phrase. Court Reporters record at speeds of 200-250 words per minute or more. Stenographic symbols are recorded on both paper tape and on the computer. A software program then translates the stenotype notes into readable text.

Most Court Reporters are employed in courts of law or in the reporting of depositions, while some others are employed in private industry, other branches of government, such as the Legislature, and in the United Nations. They may also work under the titles described below.

Freelance Court Reporters work independently of the court. Assignments can include reporting depositions (statements

made under oath and taken before a trial is held), conferences, speeches, stockholder meetings, and capturing radio or television newscasts to transmit (“cybercast”) over the Internet. These workers either get their own clients or contract with private or public agencies for assignments. Taking depositions takes up about 85 percent of a Freelance Court Reporter’s time, and those who strictly do depositions are often called Deposition Reporters.

Hearing Reporters record governmental hearings.

Other occupations that use CAT technology and tools in their day-to-day work but are not Court Reporters, include the occupations described below.

Closed Captioners or Captionists create captions or written text on television screens for hearing-impaired viewers. They also bring the words of learning to the hearing-impaired in the classroom. Words are converted electronically into captions that appear seconds later on the home TV screen. Closed captions are encoded and sent with the regular television signal. Viewers use a decoder device attached to the screen to receive them.

Scopists transcribe and edit transcripts for Court Reporters.

Medical Transcriptionists prepare medical reports for physicians and health care providers. They can record faster and more efficiently by means of machine shorthand.

Data Entry Specialists are employed by businesses to use machine shorthand for faster input of data into computer databases. Police departments, for example, have this type of need for transcribing investigation reports.

WHAT SKILLS ARE IMPORTANT?

Important skills, knowledge, and abilities for Court and Shorthand Reporters include:

- Active Listening – Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.
- Writing – Communicating effectively in writing as appropriate for the needs of the audience.
- Wrist-Finger Speed – The ability to make fast, simple, repeated movements of the fingers, hands, and wrists.
- Oral Comprehension – The ability to listen to and understand information and ideas presented through spoken words and sentences.
- Written Comprehension – The ability to read and understand information and ideas presented in writing.
- Selective Attention – The ability to concentrate on a task over a period of time without being distracted.
- Speaking – Talking to others to convey information effectively.
- Monitoring – Monitoring/Assessing performance of yourself, other individuals, or organizations to make improvements or take corrective action.
- Clerical – Knowledge of administrative and clerical procedures and systems such as word processing, managing files and records, stenography and transcription, designing forms, and other office procedures and terminology.
- Law and Government – Knowledge of laws, legal codes, court procedures, precedents, government regulations, executive orders, agency rules, and the democratic political process.

WHAT’S THE WORK ENVIRONMENT?

Court reporting can be stressful when a speaker uses technical language or has an accent or speech problem.

Court Reporters may work without breaks for long stretches of time. They work under pressure to record proceedings flawlessly and meet strict deadlines. They usually buy their own stenotype machine and related computer equipment.

Court Reporters frequently travel to various courthouses, law offices, or hearing rooms. Mileage may or may not be reimbursed.

Union Membership

So far, there has been little or no unionization of Court and Shorthand Reporters.

WHAT'S THE CALIFORNIA JOB OUTLOOK?

The following information is from the occupational projections produced by the Employment Development Department (EDD) Labor Market Information Division (LMID):

Estimated number of workers in 2000:	2,200
Estimated number of workers in 2010:	2,700
Projected Growth 2000-2010:	22.7%
Est. openings due to separations by 2010:	200

These figures do not include self-employment.

Court and Shorthand Reporters will grow at an average rate compared with all occupations in California. Total job openings expected between 2000 and 2010, including replacement positions, amount to 700.

As of March 2003 the Court Reporters Board of California had 7,934 licenses, which includes Court Reporters and Freelance Court Reporters. Between 1,200 and 1,500 Court Reporters work in the court system, with the balance of licensees working as Freelance Court Reporters in depositions. These figures do not include related occupations such as Closed Captioners, Scopists, or Medical Transcriptionists.

The Board predicts a statewide shortage of Court Reporters as workers retire, move, or leave the profession. This is especially true in metropolitan areas such as Los Angeles. Demand for Court Reporters is expected to continue in the foreseeable future, and most find immediate employment upon completion of required education and training.

Trends

Employment opportunities will increase over the next several years, specifically for workers who provide closed captioning services for television and cable broadcast stations. This is the result of federal requirements that mandate captioning for nearly all television programming by 2006. Job openings for those with computer skills are expected to increase.

WHAT DOES THE JOB PAY?

California Earnings

Court Reporters 2002 Wages

Hourly wages range from	\$19.49	to	\$28.94
Average hourly wage	\$24.47		
Average annual wage	\$50,904		

Source: Occupational Employment Survey of Employers by EDD/LMID.

Earnings vary widely both with geographic locations and the job setting. According to the California Court Reporters Association, Court Reporters permanently assigned to courts in urban areas earned between \$60,000 and \$84,000 per year in 2003. In addition, a per-page fee is earned for transcripts produced and copied. Freelance Court Reporters are paid on a per-job or per-appearance basis, plus a per-page transcript fee. Annual earnings are generally between \$18,000 and \$70,000 or more. Lower wages may reflect part time earnings. For Freelance Court Reporters, income can depend largely on reputation, networking, and a willingness to work long hours.

Hours

The court reporting profession allows flexibility in matching career to lifestyle. Court Reporters can choose to work in a structured environment with regular hours in one location, or they can travel, set their own hours, or work part time.

The customary workweek for Court Reporters is 40 hours, but Freelance Court Reporters and Hearing Reporters may work 12 hours a day for weeks at a time. Workweeks may be longer if they produce the transcripts themselves. Deposition work can be somewhat flexible since the production of transcripts is done on the worker's own time.

Benefits

Employers usually offer sick leave, vacation, and dental and medical benefits; however, self-employed Court Reporters who rely on contracts must purchase their own medical and dental insurance.

HOW DO I PREPARE FOR THE JOB?

High school students should take English courses that stress grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, and spelling, as well as keyboarding and computer data entry classes.

While entrance requirements for training programs vary, most schools require keyboarding skills as a prerequisite.

Education and Training

Court Reporters must complete a course of study at an accredited court reporting school. The Court Reporters Board of California provides a list of accredited schools. Currently there are 18 Board-approved programs in the State, located in business colleges, community colleges, and in adult education programs. These programs usually require two to four years of full-time study. Courses include courtroom and deposition procedures; medical and legal terminology; English grammar, punctuation and vocabulary; computer and word processing skills and technology; and skills practice to build speed in using a stenograph machine.

Licensing and Certification

Court Reporters must be licensed as a Certified Shorthand Reporter (CSR). Reporters not certified can do arbitrations, insurance medical exams, hearings, meetings, conferences, captioning and work with the hearing impaired.

Prospective Court Reporters in California must pass a two-day licensing examination administered by the Court Reporters Board of California to become a Certified Shorthand Reporter.

Certified Shorthand Reporters must be at least 18 years old and hold a high school diploma or GED certificate. To be eligible for the State Board exam, prospective applicants must have met one of the following requirements within the last five years:

- One year's experience (1400 hours) making verbatim records of depositions, arbitration,

hearings or judicial or related proceedings by shorthand or by machine.

- Verified certificate of satisfactory completion in a recognized California court reporting school. The certificate attests that the applicant has taken the minimum prescribed course of study, has the ability to make a word-for-word record of unfamiliar material, and can take live four-voice dictation at a speed of 200 words per minute for 15 minutes with a minimum of 97.5 percent accuracy.
- National Court Reporters Association Registered Professional Reporter certificate or Certificate of Merit.
- Passing grade on the California State Hearing Reporter examination.
- Valid Certified Shorthand Reporters certificate or license issued from another State that is approved by the board.

The State examination is difficult, and most persons who take the test do not pass the first time. The overall passing rate for persons who took and passed recent exams are: 25 percent in November 2002, 30 percent in August 2002, and 49 percent in April 2002. The test is administered twice a year, and consists of three parts: two written portions in English and Professional Practice, and a skills test of Dictation/Transcription. Testing locations are generally either in the San Francisco or Los Angeles areas. For individual training program pass rates, visit the Court Reporters Board of California at the Web site below.

Continuing Education

Currently, there are no requirements for a California CSR to obtain continuing education credits in order to maintain a CSR license.

WHERE CAN THIS JOB LEAD?

No clear promotional ladder exists for Court Reporters. However, Reporters do move back and forth between freelance, hearing, and court work that provide challenging assignments that may lead to higher pay. Advancement for Freelance Court Reporters is measured by greater responsibility, higher wages, and increased

opportunities found through knowing a large number of employers.

In addition, court reporting is a sought-after skill by employers of legal secretaries and by businesses that require a high volume of information that must be efficiently transcribed.

HOW DO I FIND THE JOB?

Direct application to employers remains one of the most effective job search methods. Jobseekers should contact associations and apply with their school placement center, courts, lawyers, and county, State, and federal personnel agencies. Private firms are listed in the yellow pages under Legal Clinics, Arbitrators, and Attorneys. California job openings can be found at various online job-listing systems including CalJOBSSM at www.caljobs.ca.gov or at America's Job Bank at www.ajb.dni.us.

For other occupational and wage information and a listing of the largest employers in any county, visit the Employment Development Department Labor Market Information Web page at www.calmis.ca.gov. Find further job search assistance from your nearest Job Service office at www.edd.ca.gov/jsloc.htm or the closest One-Stop site listed on the California WorkNet site at www.sjtcc.ca.gov/sjtccweb/one-stop.

OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The Court Reporters Board of California
2535 Capitol Oaks Drive, Suite 230
Sacramento, CA 95833
(916) 263-3660
www.courtreportersboard.ca.gov

California Court Reporters Association
2400 22nd Street, Suite 110
Sacramento, CA 95818
(916) 443-5090
www.cal-ccra.org

National Court Reporters Association
8224 Old Courthouse Road
Vienna, VA 22182-3808
(800) 272-6272
(703) 556-6272
www.ncraonline.org

Employment Projections by Occupation
www.calmis.ca.gov/htmlfile/subject/occproj.htm

Employment and Wages by Occupation
[www.calmis.ca.gov/file/occup\\$/OES\\$.htm](http://www.calmis.ca.gov/file/occup$/OES$.htm)

RELATED OCCUPATIONAL GUIDES

Word Processors and Typists	No. 20
Stenographers	No. 25
Secretaries	No. 128
Legal Secretaries	No. 172
Medical Secretaries	No. 177

OCCUPATIONAL CODE REFERENCES

SOC (*Standard Occupational Classification*)
Court Reporters 23-2091

O*NET (*Occupational Information Network*)
Court Reporters 23-2091.00

OES (*Occupational Employment Statistics*)
Stenographers and/or Court Reporters 55302

DOT (*Dictionary of Occupational Titles*)
Shorthand Reporter (clerical) 202.362-010